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(54) An animal feed station

(57) An animal feed station suitable for domestic pet animals such as long-eared breeds of dogs, comprising a support platform (12) for an animal feed container (13), means for retaining the feed container (13) against lateral displacement, and means (15, 16) for supporting the platform (12) to permit the animal to feed from the container (13) at a level higher than ground level.

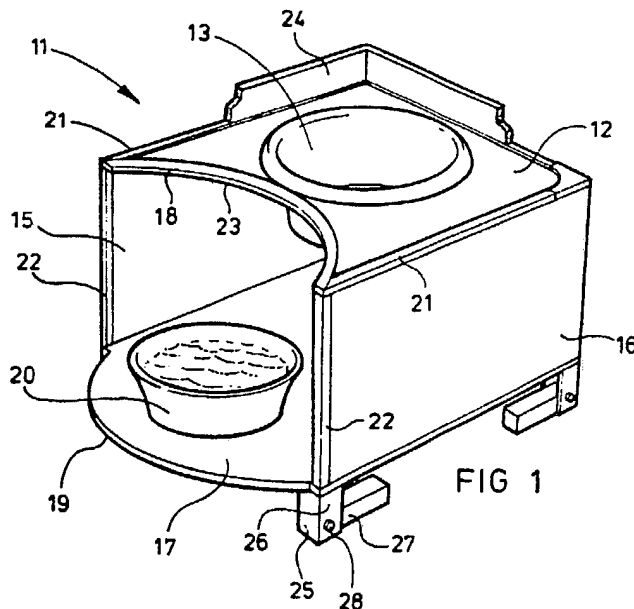
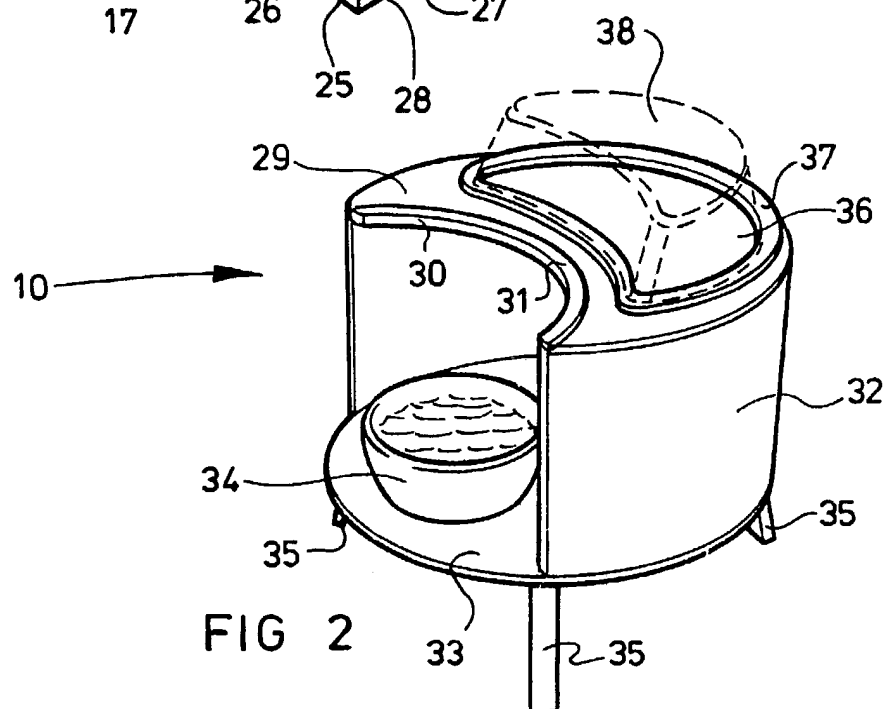
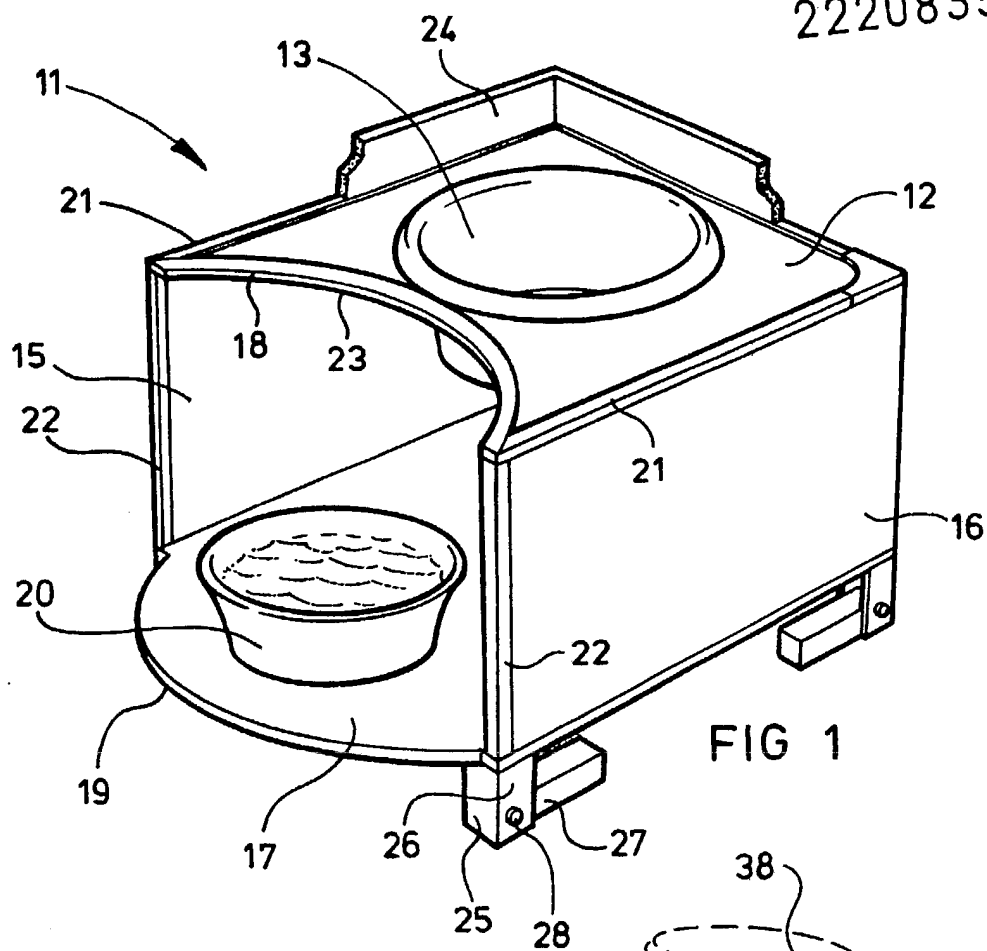


FIG 1



AN ANIMAL FEED STATION

The present invention relates generally to an animal feed station and particularly, although not exclusively, to a feed station for presenting food to long eared domestic pet animals.

One of the problems encountered by owners of long eared domestic pet animals such as long eared breeds of dogs, is the fact that the ears fall forward over the animal's nose whilst feeding so that the hair becomes contaminated with the feedstuff and must be removed in order to prevent the growth of unwanted parasitic organisms. In addition to being unhygienic, the long ears also present a problem in feeding because when partly supported on the ground the ears cover the animals eyes and obscure its vision. With its vision obscured the animal has difficulty in taking the food and typically scatters much of it in the vicinity of the feed bowl in its attempts to eat. This is both unhygienic and inconvenient for the owner who not only has to clean off the animal's ears after feeding, but also has to clean up the surrounding area, only to be faced with the same problem again next feed time. Furthermore, the flooring surface in some situations is not easy to clean.

In order to mitigate this problem, at least to some

extent, the design of the animal feed container itself has been modified and it is possible to purchase specially shaped animal feed containers having inwardly sloped side walls (that is converging upwardly) the purpose of which is to try and discourage the animal from spreading food out of the bowl whilst eating due to the fact that the inner corners of the bowl are at an acute angle to the horizontal and thus effectively form an overhang within the interior of the bowl. This attempt to deal with the problem of long eared domestic pet animals is only partly successful and does not address the problem of the animal's ears contacting the ground during feeding and the sight obstruction problem caused by the ears. In addition, it is necessary to provide domestic pet animals with water and this is usually done by use of a separate container from that in which the solid food is presented so that the feed area for the animal can become extremely messy with solid foods being partly dissolved by water spilt from an adjacent bowl. The use of two laterally spaced upwardly open containers also means that a relatively large floor space has to be dedicated to the feeding area for the animal.

The present invention seeks to address the problems outlined above and to provide an animal feed station in which at least some of the difficulties in feeding long eared domestic pet animals are overcome.

According to the present invention, therefore, an animal feed station suitable particularly for long eared domestic pet animals such as certain breeds of canines, comprises a support platform for an animal feed container, means for retaining the feed container against lateral displacement, and means for supporting the platform spaced from the ground to permit the animal to feed from the container at a level higher than ground level.

Preferably the feed container is an upwardly open feed bowl intended for solid food, and a second platform for supporting a second upwardly open container, intended to serve as a water bowl, may be provided at a lower level, underlying the said support platform but still above ground level.

Since the animal feed station will become familiar to the animal as the source of feed it may be at risk of damage by gnawing at times when feed is not made available, and for this purpose it is preferable that the edges at least of the said platform and, if provided, the said secondary platform, are reinforced with appropriate means to prevent gnawing, for example with a metal or other edge reinforcement strip.

The means for supporting the platform above ground level are preferably adjustable so as to accommodate different sizes of domestic pet animal. For example canine breeds having long ears such as spaniels and hounds, nevertheless span a wide range of sizes from the very tall afghan hounds to the rather short legged basset hounds.

The means for retaining the feed container against lateral displacement may comprise a shaped aperture in the said platform into which the container may be placed. Alternatively, of course, the aperture may be formed as a cavity for receiving the container rather than an aperture. In the case of an aperture, of course, the container should preferably be formed with a rim to retain it in position on the platform although a container having upwardly divergent walls would also be usable in this respect.

In an alternative embodiment, particularly adapted for containers of the type having upwardly convergent side walls, the means for retaining the container against lateral displacement comprises a shaped upstanding ridge defining an outline into which the container may be introduced.

In order to make the feed station adjustable in height it

is preferable that the platform and/or the said secondary platform be supported on legs the length of which may be adjusted, for example telescopically or by folding a lower portion between an extended and a collapsed position. In a preferred embodiment of the invention the said platform and the said secondary platform are joined together in a superimposed arrangement by a pair of upstanding side walls.

10 Although by raising the feed container above ground level the risk of spreading feed from the container to the surrounding surface around the container is minimised, there is still some possibility that the platform itself may have solid food spilt on it whilst the animal is eating, and in order to prevent this from spreading further it is preferable that the upper platform itself be provided with a small upstanding wall around at least three sides, namely the rear wall and the two side walls (it being anticipated that the animal will stand at the front wall to feed, this being encouraged by the appropriate positioning of the animal feed station in the corner of a room or otherwise such that the animal will be encouraged to approach the feed station from the wall intended to be the front wall). The length of the feed station from front to back may also be sufficiently great to enable it to be used as a feed store capable of receiving tins of animal food on the secondary platform

which, at the rear, is surrounded by the side walls and the upper platform and may optionally be provided with a rear wall.

- 5 Alternative embodiments of the invention may incorporate different side wall support structures, such as a cylindrical side wall.

10 As mentioned above it is intended that the animal will feed by standing at a front edge of the platform supporting the feed container, and in order to facilitate this the front edge of the platform may be formed with a concave arcuate curvature. Since the secondary platform underlies the said platform and is intended to support a
15 water container, this may be positioned slightly forwardly of the solid food container by forming the secondary platform with a convexly curved front edge.

20 Two embodiments of the present invention will now be more particularly described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of the invention; and

25 Figure 2 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the invention.

Referring first to Figure 1 an animal feed station generally indicated with the reference numeral 11 comprises a main support platform 12 having an aperture (not shown) in a central region within which is fitted an animal feed container, in this embodiment in the form of a feed bowl 13 having a surrounding peripheral lip 14 which can be engaged against the rim of the aperture in the platform 12 to retain the bowl in position so that it cannot be displaced either laterally or upwardly by a feeding animal. The platform 12 is supported on two side walls 15, 16 to which it is joined and the lower ends of which are joined by a secondary platform 17 parallel to and underlying the main platform 12. The front edge of the main platform 12, identified with the reference numeral 18, is formed with a concave arcuate curvature so that the feeding animals chest can approach closely to the bowl 13 to facilitate feeding. The front edge 19 of the secondary platform 17 is correspondingly formed with a convex curvature so that a water container 20 placed thereon may be positioned somewhat forwardly of the solid food container 13 allowing it to be more easily reached by an animal than if it were positioned further into the interior of the feed station 11 between the upper and lower platforms 12, 17.

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In order to discourage gnawing of the free edges of the platform 12 and the side walls 15, 16 these are provided

with reinforcing metal strips 21, in the case of the meeting edges of the side walls 15, 16 and the upper platform 12, 22, in the case of the front edges of the side walls 15, 16 themselves, and 23, in the case of the concavely curved front edge 18, of the platform 12. The side and rear edges of the upper platform 12 are provided with upstanding side walls 24 to prevent food displaced from the bowl 13 from falling from the platform 12 onto the surrounding floor. Any food falling forwardly over the concavely curved front edge will land in the water bowl 20 or on the lower platform 17 and therefore still be contained within the feed station 11.

The lower platform 17 is supported on four legs 25 each comprising an upper leg portion 26 pivoted to a lower leg portion 27 turnable about a pivot 28 between a collapsed position as indicated in Figure 1 and an erected position where the upper platform 12 will be raised to a higher level above the ground.

In the embodiment illustrated the side walls 15, 16 are also spanned by a rear wall (not shown) and the front-to-back dimension of the feed station 11 is such that the interior space defined by the upper and lower platforms 12, 17 and the side walls 15, 16 is sufficiently great to receive a small store of animal food tins.

The second embodiment illustrated in Figure 2 comprises an upper platform 29 of generally circular outline with a concavely curved arcuate front edge 30 reinforced with a plastics or metal reinforcement strip 31. The platform 29 is supported on a single cylindrically curved side wall 32 closed at the bottom by a flat circular secondary platform 33 carrying a water bowl 34 and itself supported on three legs 35 which, in the embodiment illustrated, are not adjustable but which, as in the case of the embodiment of Figure 1, may be made suitably adjustable either by telescopic adjustment or by folding adjustment as in the embodiment of Figure 1.

The upper platform 29 of the feed station 10 of Figure 2 has a crescent shaped area 36 defined by an upstanding ridge 37 for receiving a crescent shaped feed bowl 38 (shown in broken outline in Figure 2) having upwardly converging side walls. The feed bowl 38 may be positioned within the ridge 37 so that it is held against lateral displacement.

CLAIMS

1. An animal feed station suitable for long-eared domestic pet animals such as certain breeds of canines, comprising a support platform for an animal feed container, means for retaining the feed container against lateral displacement, and means for supporting the platform spaced from the ground to permit the animal to feed from the container at a level higher than ground level.

2. An animal feed station as claimed in Claim 1 in which there is further provided a secondary platform for supporting a further feed container such as a water bowl.

3. An animal feed station as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, in which the platform edges are reinforced with resistant material to prevent damage, for example by gnawing or chewing.

4. An animal feed station as claimed in Claim 3, in which the edge reinforcement at the platform edges comprises one or more metal reinforcement strips.

5. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the said support means are adjustable in height whereby to adjust the vertical

position of a feed container on the said platform.

6. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the said container retaining
5 means is constituted by a shaped aperture in the said platform.

7. An animal feed station as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 5, in which the said container retaining
10 means is constituted by a shaped ridge the cross-sectional shape of which is adapted to cooperate with the side walls of a feed bowl having conically tapered side walls.

8. An animal feed station as claimed in any of Claims 5 to 7, in which the said adjustable support
15 comprise at least two side walls supported on legs having telescopic or pivotable leg portions by which the effective length of the leg can be altered.

9. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, further including an upstanding wall
20 extending wholly around the perimeter of the upper platform.

10. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which there are further provided
25

means for storing food in bulk on the said secondary platform.

11. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim in which the said upper platform is supported on a part-circular cylindrical upright wall.

12. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the upper platform has a concave arcuate curved front edge.

13. An animal feed station as claimed in any preceding Claim, in which the secondary platform has a convexly curved front edge.

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14. A support device for an animal feed container having a first generally horizontal surface with an opening for receiving an animal feed container to be supported by the rim thereof, and a second generally horizontal surface underlying the first and joined thereto by upstanding lateral walls forming a partly enclosed space for a second feed container, for example for water.

15. An animal feed station substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as shown in, Figure 1 or Figure 2 of the accompanying drawings.